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Director of Central Intelligence

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SOUTH KOREA: **Mulling Response to North Korean Threats** (b)(3)

Foreign Minister Kong (b)(1) believes P'yongyang's threat to avenge the killing of its infiltrators is "serious." He assessed the most likely retaliation scenarios to be an undefined incident along the DMZ, a sabotage or terrorist attack in South Korea, or the murder or kidnapping of South Korean citizens.

— Kong said the North is also probing for weakness in the US–South Korean alliance. He argued that a display of military power might be necessary to show resolve. ***He apparently rules out a substantial augmentation of US troops, which could provoke the North to lash out violently.*** (b)(3)

Seoul, at a minimum, wants a Security Council presidential statement on the submarine incident; Kong said Beijing is signaling that it will not block the move. ***The South has been slow to decide on other responses, in part because it has few attractive options.***

— ***Any effort to deliberately hinder implementation of the Agreed Framework or pursuit of four-party peace talks would isolate South Korea without harming the North. P'yongyang would be pleased if Seoul limited its participation in both efforts.***

— ***Halting secret talks with the North on economic aid would foreclose the South's only forum for bilateral contact. This would leave the diplomatic field to direct US–North Korean contacts on issues such as POWs/MIAs.*** (b)(3)

Seoul must also be wary of erratic South Korean public opinion, which in the past has turned in favor of cooperation with the North after periods of tension. (b)(3)

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